

Whereupon an abbess starts up with the cry of heresy. It is, nevertheless, enacted by the Temporality that no man be appointed bishop or priest unless he can preach. To show them how to preach, a reverend doctor, whom Diligence has discovered in some obscure corner of the land, ascends the pulpit and delivers an evangelical discourse. "Come down, dastart," roars the parson, "and gang sell draif."

In conclusion, Spirituality is arrested by order of the king, deprived and banished, the evangelical doctor and other exemplary clerics put in his place, and the Acts reforming the abuses rampant in both Church and State solemnly proclaimed by Diligence. John the Commonweal, gorgeously apparelled, at last obtains a seat in Parliament. The work of reformation is concluded by the hanging of Deceit and Falsity, whose clerical disguise is torn from their backs, and who teach merchants how to cheat. The scene closes with a sermon by Folly, who claims kin with everybody more or less, and discourses from the text, "The number of fools is infinite." Especially biting is the satire directed against fools in high places. Folly has a hat to fit every prince in Christendom :—

"For I have heir, I to the⁷ tell,
Ane nobill cap imperial!,
Quhilk is nocht ordanit but
for doings Of Emperours, of
duiks, and kings. For
princely and imperiall fuillis,
They sould have luggis
[ears] as lang as muillis. The
pryde of princes withoutin
faill Gars all the warld run
top our taill. To win thame
warldlie gloir and gude,
They care nocht shedding
of saikles [innocent] blude."

It would hardly be fair to those against whom the shafts of Lyndsay's satire were directed to accept a drama as history.

Allowance must be made for the personality of the poet and the aim of his poem. That aim was to amuse as well as instruct, and the coarse burlesque in which he indulges demanded a certain license with fact. Even so, we may, I think, safely assume that the poet in the main did not exaggerate when he represented the Church as rotten to the core, and fairly took its dignitaries as the butt of his ridicule. From official records as well as the dicta of contemporaries, it is certain that reform by drastic methods was as clamant as it